



Statement on the Application of Biotechnology for Food and Agriculture in the Asia-Pacific

The Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) recognises that with growing populations and limited resources, it is critical for the Asia-Pacific region to find more efficient ways to feed its people. PBEC therefore applauds recent progress made by APEC toward an open and efficient food trading system designed to provide more food for more people at a price they can afford to pay, while increasing wealth for all economies in the Pacific Basin.

One important element of the APEC Food System is to expand the tools used to bring sustainability to agricultural production. One such tool is biotechnology. Biotechnological methods and products constitute the next steps in innovative technological development. These new technologies are an extension of traditional breeding and crop improvement methodologies delivering significant benefits to humankind, locally and globally. The promotion of innovation and the nurturing of new technologies are critically important to societies and their development. Innovative technological change has raised living standards, improved quality of life and enabled mankind to combat hunger, disease and environmental degradation. It is in the public interest that all relevant parties join together to educate the peoples of APEC about new, innovative biotechnologies.

Because trade is increasingly global, developments in biotechnology must be addressed at the national, regional and international levels in all the APEC economies. PBEC is committed to the WTO science and rules-based approach to addressing these issues, and to expanded capacity-building activities in the region to ensure that the benefits of biotechnology can be assessed and utilised by regional economies.

PBEC wholly supports the commitment made by APEC Leaders in Auckland in 1999 recognising the important contribution biotechnology can make in expanding sustainable agricultural production in the Pacific Basin.

Therefore, PBEC calls for:

1. Transparent information to allow consumers to separate myths from the facts of food biotechnology and thus restore public confidence;
2. Creation of an "AgTech" network in the APEC economies to communicate information about best practice in applying technology and, specifically, biotechnology to agriculture;
3. Continuation of "best practices" studies, by agricultural sectors important to the region, that incorporate specific information and learning on the benefits of biotechnology;
4. Commitment to include a learning component in each PBEC meeting by holding at least one two-day workshop forum to advance knowledge and policy development in selected food and agriculture sectors.

Endorsed by the PBEC Steering Committee 03/19/00
Adopted by the PBEC Board of Directors 03/19/00
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BIOTECHNOLOGY AS ADDRESSED IN THE ELEVENTH APEC MINISTERIAL
MEETING JOINT STATEMENT AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND 9-10 SEPTEMBER 1999

Biotechnology

45 Recognising the important contribution biotechnology can make in expanding agricultural production and noting the recommendations of the SOM Chair's Report on ABAC's proposal for an APEC Food System, Ministers affirmed the importance of transparent and science-based approaches to the introduction and use of biotechnology products, and of technical cooperation, exchanging information on new technology, and capacity building in this area. Such activity should take into account WTO rules, as well as consumers' interest in food safety, environmental quality, and facilitate the realisation of the potential benefits of this technology. Ministers requested that the Agricultural Technical Cooperation Experts Group (ATC) report on the work already done in this area, along with any plans or recommendations for future work and take into account studies being conducted in other international fora, for review by the SOM next year and discussion by Ministers Responsible for Trade at their June 2000 meeting.